



Linux Ubuntu 26.04 Manual Pages on command 'whatis.1'

\$ man whatis.1

WHATIS(1) Manual pager utils WHATIS(1)

NAME

whatis - display one-line manual page descriptions

SYNOPSIS

whatis [-dlv?V] [-r|-w] [-s list] [-m system[,...]] [-M path] [-L locale] [-C file] name ...

DESCRIPTION

Each manual page has a short description available within it. `whatis` searches the manual page names and displays the manual page descriptions of any name matched.

name may contain wildcards (-w) or be a regular expression (-r). Using these options, it may be necessary to quote the name or escape (\) the special characters to stop the shell from interpreting them.

index databases are used during the search, and are updated by the `mandb` program. Depending on your installation, this may be run by a periodic cron job, or may need to be run manually after new manual pages have been installed. To produce an old style text `whatis` database from the relative index database, issue the command:

```
whatis -M manpath -w '*' | sort > manpath/whatis
```

where `manpath` is a manual page hierarchy such as `/usr/man`.

OPTIONS

-d, --debug

Print debugging information.

-v, --verbose

Print verbose warning messages.

-r, --regex

Interpret each name as a regular expression. If a name matches any part of a page name, a match will be made. This option causes whatis to be somewhat slower due to the nature of database searches.

-w, --wildcard

Interpret each name as a pattern containing shell style wildcards. For a match to be made, an expanded name must match the entire page name. This option causes whatis to be somewhat slower due to the nature of database searches.

-l, --long

Do not trim output to the terminal width. Normally, output will be truncated to the terminal width to avoid ugly results from poorly-written NAME sections.

-s list, --sections=list, --section=list

Search only the given manual sections. list is a colon- or comma-separated list of sections. If an entry in list is a simple section, for example "3", then the displayed list of descriptions will include pages in sections "3", "3perl", "3x", and so on; while if an entry in list has an extension, for example "3perl", then the list will only include pages in that exact part of the manual section.

-m system[,...], --systems=system[,...]

If this system has access to other operating systems' manual page names, they can be accessed using this option. To search NewOS's manual page names, use the option -m NewOS.

The system specified can be a combination of comma delimited operating system names. To include a search of the native operating system's manual page names, include the system name man in the argument string. This option will override the \$SYSTEM environment variable.

-M path, --manpath=path

Specify an alternate set of colon-delimited manual page hierarchies to search. By default, whatis uses the \$MANPATH environment variable, unless it is empty or unset, in which case it will determine an appropriate manpath based on your \$PATH environment variable. This option overrides the contents of \$MANPATH.

-L locale, --locale=locale

whatis will normally determine your current locale by a call to the C function setlocale(3) which interrogates various environment variables, possibly including \$LC_MESSAGES and \$LANG. To temporarily override the determined value, use this option to

supply a locale string directly to whatis. Note that it will not take effect until the search for pages actually begins. Output such as the help message will always be displayed in the initially determined locale.

-C file, --config-file=file

Use this user configuration file rather than the default of `~/.manpath`.

-, --help

Print a help message and exit.

--usage

Print a short usage message and exit.

-V, --version

Display version information.

EXIT STATUS

- 0 Successful program execution.
- 1 Usage, syntax or configuration file error.
- 2 Operational error.
- 16 Nothing was found that matched the criteria specified.

ENVIRONMENT

SYSTEM If `$SYSTEM` is set, it will have the same effect as if it had been specified as the argument to the `-m` option.

MANPATH

If `$MANPATH` is set, its value is interpreted as the colon-delimited manual page hierarchy search path to use.

See the **SEARCH PATH** section of `manpath(5)` for the default behaviour and details of how this environment variable is handled.

MANWIDTH

If `$MANWIDTH` is set, its value is used as the terminal width (see the `--long` option).

If it is not set, the terminal width will be calculated using the value of `$COLUMNS`, and `ioctl(2)` if available, or falling back to 80 characters if all else fails.

FILES

`/usr/share/man/index.(bt|db|dir|pag)`

A traditional global index database cache.

`/var/cache/man/index.(bt|db|dir|pag)`

An FHS compliant global index database cache.

/usr/share/man/.../whatis

A traditional whatis text database.

SEE ALSO

apropos(1), man(1), mandb(8)

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BUGS

<https://gitlab.com/man-db/man-db/-/issues>

<https://savannah.nongnu.org/bugs/?group=man-db>

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